

# Light Fantastic

Bass Tracker PT175 Special Edition is easy

Story and Photos by  
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on the wallet, strong on performance

Nowhere is it written that you have to spend big bucks on a bass boat to fish competitively, nor that fiberglass boats outperform aluminum boats. Truth be told, Tracker build boats that perform like the more expensive fiberglass models and have all the same amenities of their fiberglass brethren, but at a fraction of the cost. A day on the water with Bass Tracker PT175 Special Edition served as a quick reminder why Tracker is the No. 1 freshwater boatbuilder in the world.

Those thoughts were skittering around in my head when the bubble-gum colored floating worm suddenly disappeared from sight and my line went tight. I knew a feisty little Dog River largemouth was on the other end.

I set the hook with some vigor, sending a little shudder through the Bass Tracker Pro Team 175's aluminum hull. The fight was on.

Joe Bogard, my fishing partner manning the trolling motor smiled: I'd just christened the newest addition to his Travis Boating Center showroom less than five miles from his Pascagoula, Mississippi, dealership.

### BANG FOR THE BUCK

The PT175 Special Edition package we were fishing from is fast becoming one of the best sellers in the Tracker Marine line of welded aluminum fishing boats. For good reason, too. At just over 17 feet in length you really get a lot of fishing boat for the money.

In this age, when a decent ready-to-run bass boat and trailer package runs nearly \$20,000, this Bass Tracker rolls out the door for less than \$10K when rigged with a 25 hp outboard. From there, my partner says, the price eases up the ladder depending on which Mercury outboard, up to the PT175's 75 hp maximum rating, you want.

For example, the package we were chasing marsh bass from was equipped with the Mercury OptiMax 75, which put the price right at \$17,000. That's a healthy price, but the OptiMax is a strong performer and miserly on fuel for its size. It makes the 17-foot Tracker, which is based on a modified-V, all-aluminum welded hull with unique offset transom, really fly.

### TOP-LEVEL PERFORMANCE

The 75 hp OptiMax, propped with a 20-inch-pitch stainless steel Laser II three-blade, pops up on plane in less than four ticks of the stopwatch, making it really nice for running in skinny waters.

■ *Merc OptiMax 75 is the largest engine available for the Tracker PT175 SE. If you have the need for speed, this is the engine of choice.*





■ Fishing is easy from the decks of the Tracker PT175, with lots of working space for two anglers to chase bass or panfish.

■ The PT175's rod locker can hold a half-dozen 7-foot rods. The carpet in the lockers helps to keep the boat quiet and protect your gear.



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From there, it runs up to its top speed of 40-plus mph in the time it takes heavier hulls to get to 30. This boat is sporty.

On the other hand, the OptiMax 75 is a heavy outboard, and when it's on the transom of a light hull such as the PT175, it tends to make the boat sit a lot more bow-high when the trolling motor is down — and to be quite trim sensitive when the boat is running at speed. One tick too much on the trim switch and the bow begins porpoising.

From our outing I'd say that although the Bass Tracker PT175 is rated for the 75 and handles it fine, a better choice would be the Merc 50 hp four-stroke. The 50 would provide plenty of power while saving the buyer nearly \$2000 in the process. Such engine power would also

set the PT175 in a more level fishing attitude, which makes maneuvering with the trolling motor better in wind or current.

As tested, the Bass Tracker PT175 SE cruises quite comfortably at 30 mph, and tops out at 42.1 mph with two aboard, a full fuel tank and a moderate amount of gear. The design of the hull bottom and its light weight contribute to the boat's speedy performance.

These items also contribute to its fuel efficiency. Fuel economy is maximized at around 3500 rpm where it gets 5.3 mpg. Put the throttle to the wall and you'll still get better than 4 mpg while the OptiMax is turning 5400 rpm.

### RIGGED FOR SERIOUS FISHERMEN

When it comes to a fishing platform, Tracker

■ With its narrow beam and 17-foot length, the PT175 can get into tight, skinny waters. The boat's very maneuverable both on and off plane.



## Bass Tracker PT175 SE

**Base Price** (w/ Merc 25 EL and trailer):... \$9795  
**Price as Tested:** (w/ 75 Merc OptiMax, dealer prep and shipping): ..... \$17,095  
**Top Speed:** ..... 42.1 mph  
**0-to-30 mph:** ..... 8.0 seconds  
**Construction:** ..... Aluminum  
**Console Type:** ..... TK  
**Length:** ..... 17' 3"  
**Beam:** ..... 6' 11"  
**Hull Weight:** ..... TK  
**Rigged Weight:** ..... 1150 lbs.  
**Trailer Weight:** ..... 1700 lbs.  
**Fuel Capacity:** ..... 21 gals.  
**Livewell Capacity:** ..... TK  
**Maximum Horsepower:** ..... 75

**Engine Tested:** ..... 75 hp Mercury OptiMax  
**Type:** ..... I-3 PCM 2-stroke  
**Displacement:** ..... 1.52L (93 cid)  
**Weight:** ..... 375 lbs.  
**Shaft Length:** ..... 20"  
**Recommended WOT RPM:** ..... 5000-5750  
**Gear Ratio:** ..... 2.33:1  
**Propeller:** ..... 12<sup>3</sup>/4x20" 3-blade Laser II SS

### Weather Conditions:

**Air Temperature:** ..... 75F  
**Water Temperature:** ..... 68F  
**Wind:** ..... 3 mph  
**Water Condition:** ..... Light Chop??

### TEST RESULTS

Engine (rpm)	Speed (mph)	Fuel (gph)	(mpg)	Range <sup>1</sup> (miles)
1000	3.7	1.2	3.1	58
1500	5.4	1.8	3.0	57
2000	6.7	2.7	2.5	47
2500	12.0	4.1	2.9	55
3000	19.3	4.8	4.0	76
<b>3500<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>99</b>
4000	31.4	6.5	4.8	91
4500	35.6	8.2	4.3	82
5000	40.0	8.7	4.6	87
5400 (WOT)	42.1	10.1	4.2	79

<sup>1</sup> Based on 90% fuel capacity  
<sup>2</sup> Optimum cruise speed

### Tracker

Dept. BWB  
 2500 E. Kearney St.  
 Springfield, MO 65803  
 800/TRACKER  
[trackerboats.com](http://trackerboats.com)



■ *The Tracker scoots right along with a 75 hp Merc on the transom.*



■ *The boat's console setup provides all the instrumentation you need to monitor the engine and handle basic boat functions. The windshield does good job keeping wind at bay.*



■ *A Lowrance fishfinder and a full-function livewell are just two of the features that come standard with this package.*

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vides those in each compartment.) There's no room for bulky tackle bags or tackleboxes except in the cockpit.

Still, there's a place for just about everything else a bass club or recreational bass angler typically brings on an outing. Storage for extra life vests, jackets, dock lines and a spare prop are found beneath the three seats in the cockpit area.

Rod storage is more than adequate, as well. The portside locker will accommodate a half-dozen rods — a couple up to 7 feet in length.

Seating comfort is above average for an entry-level fishing platform. The PT175 comes with a pair of fishing seats on pedestals, so whether fishing from the bow or stern you can sit instead of stand.

We found sitting preferable when it got a little windy because the hull's light weight and modified-V design on a narrow beam tends to make it susceptible to being a little rocky if the anglers step to the same side at the same time.

### FUN TO DRIVE, EASY TO TOW

The PT175 is very easy to control and maneuver with the 12-volt, 46-pound-thrust MotorGuide trolling motor, which is great

when you are dodging stumps or fishing in tight to structure.

There's one livewell, located at the stern. It's divided and set up with a full-functioning aeration system with pump-out feature so tournament anglers are perfectly at ease headed to weigh-in.

Speaking of heading to weigh-ins, the PT175, although a relatively lightweight aluminum platform, handles chop with the same ease as it gets on plane. The hull has a sharp point of entry that slices through smaller chop and enough deadrise at the stern to smooth out the ride. It also sports strakes that divert water away from the sides to keep the occupants dry as long as there's not a lot of cross-wind.

The PT175 is also unusually quiet for an aluminum boat. Tracker uses a full-length longitudinal box-ladder-style stringer system as the floor support. The voids are filled with flotation foam. This combination reduces water-induced noise to a minimum while giving the boat a very solid feel underfoot.

Up on plane it handles like a little sport car, responding quickly to even the lightest steering and trim changes. In short, it's just fun to run.

It's also fun to tow. The trailer is a single-axle with swingaway tongue so it'd fit right in the garage. Plus, the entire boat/trailer package weighs only 1700 pounds and is light enough so you can tow it with any small pickup or SUV.

All in all, the Bass Tracker Pro Team 175 Special Edition would be a nice boat to have around if you like to fish smaller impoundments or rivers and want to do so on a budget without sacrificing the comforts and conveniences bass fishermen tend to expect. **BWB**

Marine has done a commendable job. The Bass Tracker PT175 Special Edition is really well equipped and nicely laid out for angler comfort and convenience in a small space.

It comes standard with full instrumentation and a Lowrance X37 fishfinder that shows surface temperature and the status of the trolling-motor battery. A built-in, two-bank, 4-amp battery charger is also part of the standard rigging.

The front and rear deck areas provide plenty of room to fish and the rod locker, located on the port side, and storage compartments are carpeted. The fore and aft tackle-storage lockers are small, which is to be expected on a 17-foot, 3-inch hull with a 6-foot, 11-inch beam. But they are fine for anglers who like to travel light with tackle already organized in drop-in plastic storage boxes. (Tracker actually pro-